

**This Interview Is part of the United States Marine Corps History and Museums
Division Oral History Collection.**

ATTENTION: © Copyright The Vietnam Archive at Texas Tech University. "Fair use" criteria of Section 107 of the Copyright Act of 1976 must be followed. The following materials can be used for educational and other noncommercial purposes without the written permission of the Vietnam Archive at Texas Tech University. These materials are not to be used for resale or commercial purposes without written authorization from the Vietnam Archive at Texas Tech University. All materials cited must be attributed to the Vietnam Archive at Texas Tech University.

**The Vietnam Archive
Oral History Project
Interview with Maj. Lane Rogers
Conducted by G. Sgt. Floyd Jordan
January 11, 1966
Transcribed by Laura Darden**

1 Floyd Jordan: This interview is being conducted with Major Lane Rogers by
2 Gunnery Sergeant Floyd N. Jordan at Marine Corps Schools, Quantico, Virginia, on 11
3 January 1966. The subject of this interview is Delta Operations, Viet Cong Tactics, and
4 it is unclassified. Would you state your name, grade, and service number please, sir?

5 Lane Rogers: I'm Major Lane Rogers, US Marine Corps, 061169.

6 FJ: What were your duty assignments while you were in Vietnam, sir?

7 LR: I was the advisor to the 3rd Battalion Vietnamese Marine Corps.

8 FJ: What period did you serve in these billets?

9 LR: I was in the serving in that billet from 5 June 1964 to 5 June 1965.

10 FJ: Where were you physically located within Vietnam during this period, sir?

11 LR: We were in approximately eight different locations, but I would say,
12 generally, the first six months we spent in the Delta area. The month of December we
13 spent on Phu Quoc Island. In January, we were operating in generally in the area between
14 Saigon and Vung Tau. In February, we went to Da Nang. In the latter stage of February
15 and March, we were down in Bong Son-Qui Nhon area, then we went back to Da Nang
16 and then we returned to Saigon for capital military district duty.

17 FJ: Would you discuss any major combat actions in which you participated,
18 giving the dates, location, and purpose of the operation? Describe the operation as you
19 saw it from your viewpoint.

1 LR: I think one of the most significant operations that we had, we had eight
2 major engagements during the year that I was with the 3rd Battalion was in mid-
3 November of 1964. This was when we were operating with the 7th ARVN Army
4 Division in the area of My Tho. We were operating generally west of My Tho along the
5 Mekong. The overall plan was—Viet Cong had established a pattern of operations in that
6 they would come in in battalion strength from the Plain of Reeds area and we were able
7 through our intelligence sources, or we were able to track them in such a fashion that we
8 knew approximately when they were in the area and approximately what strength and we
9 thought we were able to identify the units. So, after a period of about three weeks of
10 fixing-type operations—we'd run a probe to find out if somebody was in the area or
11 not—and we launched a full-scale offensive in which we participated as the Marine
12 landing force. The whole battalion operated in this fashion. Basically, the situation on, if
13 I remember correctly, the operation started on 17 November and lasted for four days. We
14 established a counter-plan by sending aircraft of leaflets and artillery prep and so forth
15 and so on in one area, and the division commander offset the operation by about five-
16 thousand meters. Fortunately so because the Viet Cong in that area had a tendency to
17 follow up on all our preparations. If we'd drop leaflets in an area, they'd get out. If we
18 fired artillery prep in an area, why, they'd get out. So by the offset, we were able to
19 basically entrap the VC battalion that we got into. My battalion mounted out with the
20 river assault group at practically 03:30 from My Tho and we headed up the Mekong. The
21 actual physical landing was at approximately 06:30 in the morning. It was initially
22 unopposed; there was no contact. Five other army battalions formed the inland portion of
23 the operation. It was allegedly a semi hammer-and-anvil-type tactic, but it did not evolve
24 as that by the time I got finished, in that one side of the trap was open. So the end of the
25 first day, the army moved another battalion in by helicopter to try and pick up the
26 remnants of the VC battalion that we engaged. As we proceeded up a small tributary on
27 foot, the first bend that we came to, we ran into intense small-arms fire and picked up our
28 first casualties of the day. We had seventeen people hit and lost two, one platoon
29 commander right between the horns right off the bat. At this time, the VC sent a squad
30 off to our right flank, which apparently was a ruse. They were trying to draw us off from
31 the main position. Our flank security picked up the squad. We killed three of them. Two

1 that we know of escaped and it's undetermined about the rest. I'd like to point out at this
2 time, in this area of the Delta, the only possible navigation is either small boat navigation
3 or foot navigation. There's no—inland, I don't think you could even move amtrack. It's
4 a very heavy, mangrove type swamp; certainly no mechanized form at all can move in
5 there. And it was also very difficult in form of medevac. The only medevacs that we
6 could get out were by small boat, which caused our second problem because the river
7 assault group sent some small armored assault boats up to assist us. The instructions
8 which we gave the commander, and which he understood, became confused as they went
9 down the line so that the second, third, and fourth boats in line instead of firing to the left,
10 which would've been to our front, fired both to the left and right and we sustained twelve
11 more casualties through this small-arms fire. Fortunately, only two were serious. By this
12 time, we knew that we literally had a tiger by the tail because we had two companies
13 engaged of my battalion against a target, which was across the stream. The stream was
14 about thirty to forty meters wide and was really too deep for fording. You could swim
15 across it, but we had no boats, so were committed in a more of a blocking operation. We
16 called an Army battalion up on our left flank, which was across the stream. They
17 couldn't get into the position. We find out later why and that it was a position that was
18 about five-hundred meters on a side with three belts of defensive fortifications, all which
19 were fortified. The CP had been waterproofed and dug in, which we found to be quite
20 unusual because the water table being so low in the Delta, the VC don't usually go to this
21 extent. We find out subsequently, this was a position of a training battalion and I'm glad
22 to say that we permanently interrupted their training. As the operation progressed, our
23 two lead companies started running out of ammunition. We were receiving 57(-
24 millimeter) recoilless fire and we were receiving light mortar fire. Because of the dense
25 terrain, we were having trouble adjusting artillery and we finally had to terminate our
26 artillery fire when we were getting some awfully close rounds. I have to point out the
27 fact the VC were about sixty meters away from us. We couldn't see them and they
28 couldn't see us, but obviously, we could see where the fire was coming from and so could
29 they. We executed a relief by placing to it our two additional companies up on line and
30 withdrawing the companies that were exhausted, that had exhausted their ammunition.
31 We got all our casualties out. By this stage of the game, we had about thirty-five

1 wounded and six dead, if I remember correctly. We were able to employ our integral 81s
2 so well that we expended everything we had. The army units on our left flank still were
3 not able to get across the canal that was in front of the VC position, and we were not able
4 to get across the river into their position, it being broad daylight. The firefight, which
5 initially started about 10:00 o'clock, didn't really let up until 1400. At this time, we had
6 elements of the Army 62nd Aviation Company, armed Huey's come in, and because of
7 our proximity to the VC; we were able to very accurately mark for them. One thing I'd
8 like to point this out as far as Vietnamese marines are concerned there, they're helicopter-
9 oriented and they do a really fine job because we later had the opportunity to call Huey's
10 down to twenty-five meters in front of us and they'll hold and fight right back. The rest
11 of the day was composed of straight Huey strikes until approximately 16:30 when we had
12 VNAF aircraft overhead, and we brought them in. Fortunately, because of the stream
13 between the VC and us, we were partially protected and the VC target area was clearly
14 defined, so we had no short drops. The VNAF was using 80s, A-1Es, and their strikes
15 were reasonably effective. Something we found to be much more effective against
16 personnel targets—most of the positions were just trench lines with reinforced trench
17 lines—were frag clusters. None of the ordnance that was dropped was heavy stuff; no
18 500-pounders, no 750s. The effect was highly significant. By nightfall, which in that
19 season was about 18:30; the perimeter was pretty well closed. We had the stream pretty
20 well sealed off on our side. The army battalion on our left had fairly well closed the box
21 and the other army battalions which would be in front of us, in effect, were starting to
22 close the ring. The entire area within which the VC were compressed would be a square
23 about, I would estimate at that time, about 1000 to 1500 meters on a side. Unfortunately,
24 when the last blocking battalion was helo-lifted in, they were lifted in too late and were
25 not able to fully tie in their perimeter security. I'd like to point out this for one specific
26 reason. The VC area able very quickly to find unit weaknesses in that if a perimeter had
27 been drawn around them, they'll find a hole and as soon as they find a hole, as soon as it
28 gets dark, if it's to their advantage, they'll get out and they'll go out through that hole.
29 This is exactly what happened because we spent all that night, we directed artillery into
30 the position. We established a 360-degree perimeter because we expected either
31 infiltrators or that possibly other units would come up behind us, but by the next

1 morning, the VC had gone. Body count on the position, they left 106 bodies behind. We
2 did capture three, all of which were dressed in civilian clothes and were certainly on their
3 way out. One of the significant people that we captured was the woman commissary
4 officer of the unit. The way we picked her up, she was very casually walking out through
5 the perimeter when we went in, but she was just not dressed like most people in that area,
6 her accent was a little bit off. We took her into custody. She later identified the unit and
7 identified the people. Some of the bodies that we picked up were hard-core VC, and
8 were members of the training cadre. We captured, oh, I estimate about four-hundred
9 pounds of literature, about half of which was devoted to how shoot down a helicopter.
10 From the bodies that were left in the position, you could tell that the Hueys had really
11 done a fine job. In coordinating on the position, we found that the Huey, because of its
12 superior radio, makes a wonderful antenna and you can control them so quickly and so
13 well, that if you want to employ any other supporting arms, air, or artillery, you can get
14 them out of the area and you can get them back in pretty quickly. They'll go up high and
15 you can talk to them. We've talked to Huey's up to fifteen miles on 10s. I caution
16 anybody using them, though, in frequency scan. If you have too many units using 10s and
17 frequencies are too close: One, you'll block each other out, and secondly, when a Huey
18 comes on air, he blocks everybody out. So, you have to exercise some caution in this
19 respect. That's most of it. Can I fill you in on any other portions?

20 FJ: I think you've covered it very well, sir. Thank you very much.